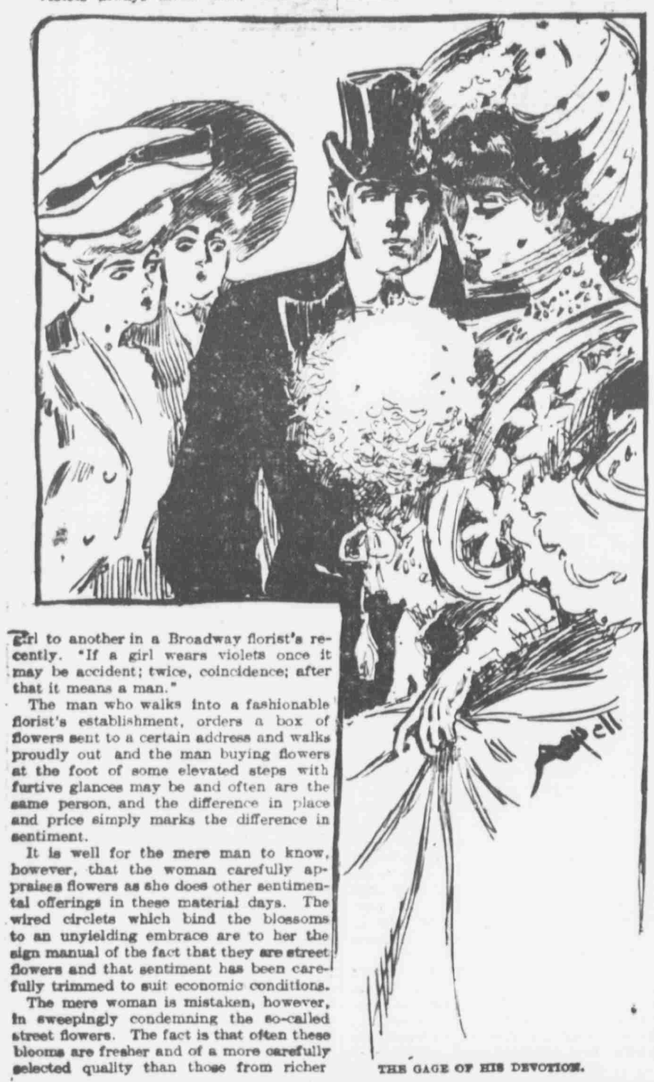
Roses by the Thousand.

How New York Gets Its Flower Supply... The Ever Popular Violet.

To a woman flowers are something more than mere blossoms at the end of stems. To her they imply sentiment, generosity and a lot of other masculine virtues.

"Violets always mean man," said one girl to another in a Broadway florist's recently. "If a girl wears violets once it may be accident; twice, coincidence; after that it means a man."



THE GAGE OF HIS DEVOTION.

The man who walks into a fashionable florist's establishment, orders a box of flowers sent to a certain address and walks proudly out and the man buying flowers at the foot of some elevated steps with furtive glances may be and often are the same person, and the difference in place and price simply marks the difference in sentiment.

It is well for the mere man to know, however, that the woman carefully appraises flowers as she does other sentimental offerings in these material days. The wired circlets which bind the blossoms to an unyielding embrace are to her the sign manual of the fact that they are street flowers and that sentiment has been carefully trimmed to suit economic conditions.

The mere woman is mistaken, however, in sweepingly condemning the so-called street flowers. The fact is that often these blooms are fresher and of a more carefully selected quality than those from richer and showier places. The reason for this is to be found in the work of the middleman, for most of the flowers in New York are not direct importations from the greenhouses, but come by a commercial path which takes them first to the show rooms devoted to their exhibition to dealers and wholesale buyers. A large percentage of these buyers are the men who send out boys on the streets.

The "Greeks," as they are called, and the word covers many nationalities, come every morning at 6 o'clock to the flower exchanges, and as soon as the boxes are opened begin to dicker. As soon as awnings are out and shop doors open the flowers, still with the morning dew upon them, are ready for purchase. That they are cheaper than the florist's flowers is due to the fact that there is no rent or service to pay for.

To appreciate the contrast found in these wholesale places, one should first of all take a peep at some of the retail shops. Boxes of colored straw are filled to the brim with exotic blooms, whole shelves riot in colors of growing plants. It is a holiday week and competition is rife.

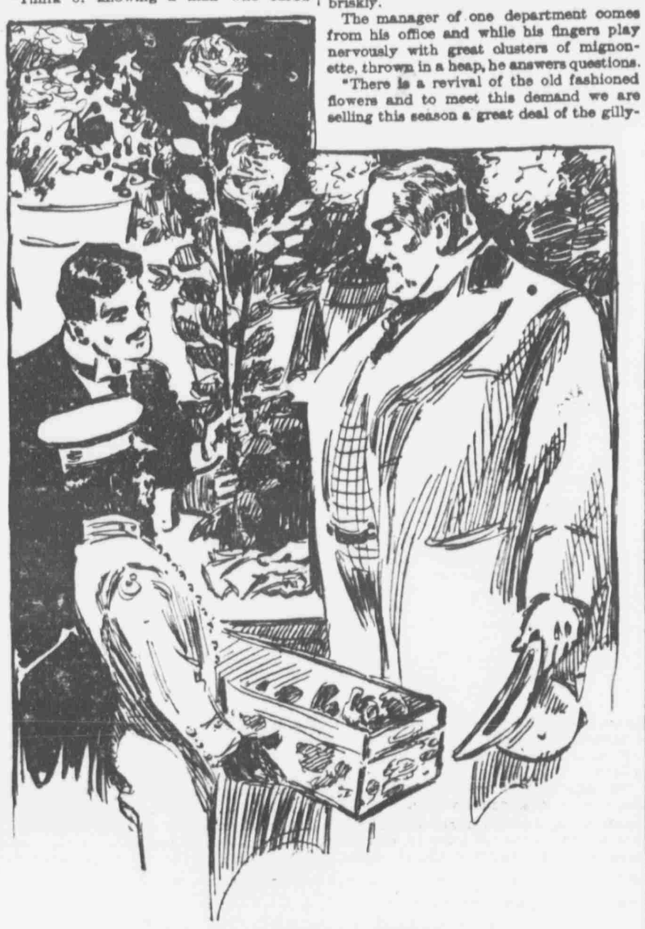
A huge rhododendron takes up an entire corner of one of these retail establishments. Its price is $75, and it is flanked on one side by an azalea whose top is a mass of perfectly shaped and perfectly matched blossoms. It is valued at $100. There is a crimson rambler, one of the season's most popular offerings, for $30, and a genesta for $19.

Two girls standing before a long box of polished green, filled with white carnations, each twice the size of the original mother of these flowers, are deliberately counting the number of them, pushing aside moss, feathery maidenhair and ribbons.

"Twelve dozen," says one breathlessly.

"And a half," is added by the other.

"Think of knowing a man who cared enough for you to send you such a perfectly gorgeous affair!"



AT EIGHTEEN A DOZEN.

"Think of knowing one who had money enough," says the second, practically. "Just as soon as I meet a man he loses all his money the same day."

In another corner, while one of the salesman holds, with masculine patience, a long stemmed American beauty, the possible purchaser is moved to reminiscence.

"My dear I know it is true, for he told me himself. A man never has any sense of humor when he is in love, but when he gets over it he remembers lots of amusing incidents.

"He was crazy over her, but when the florist told him that the American beauties were $36 a dozen it did stagger him a little. He asked weakly if they were all that price, and the man said, rather superciliously, 'Oh, no, we have some for thirty,' and showed him a dozen that were absolutely the same, only the stems were six inches shorter. He hesitated a little and then, as I say, he was just crazy over her, so he boubht the ones for $36 and had them sent.

"He arrived at the very time the flowers came and she was perfectly delighted with them. After she had thanked him again and again, she excused herself a minute, went out of the room, came back with a pair of scissors and while she thanked him again he had the pleasure of seeing her snip off six inches of stem, just the difference between $36 and $30. Of course, now, he sees the humor of it, now that he's stopped being in love.

"I saw him buying flowers on the street the other day. Married, you know. Oh, yes, the same girl."

It is but a few steps from this shop to one where art is not taken into account, where sentiment plays no hand, where bare shelves, wooden tables and clay stands are the only accessories.

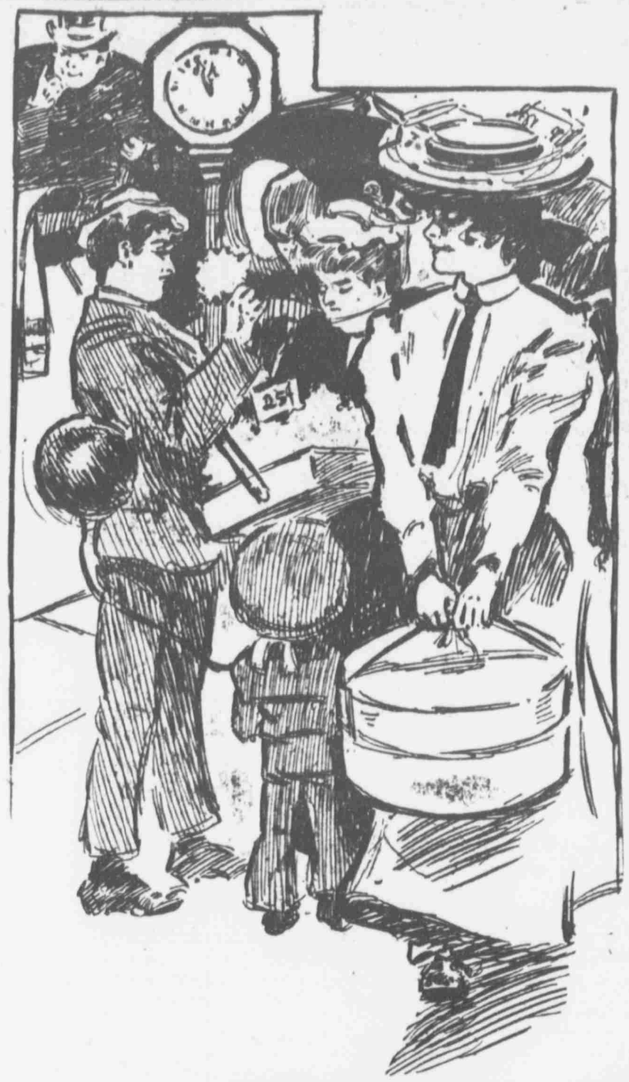
Busy men with hats on the back of their heads are flying about, dealers in their wake appraising values and making business arrangements. Telephones are ringing in various parts of the establishment and the words, "Two hundred American Beauties," "Five dozen calla lilies," "Four hundred carnations," are repeated briskly.

The manager of one department comes from his office and while his fingers play nervously with great clusters of mignonette, thrown in a heap, he answers questions.

"There is a revival of the old fashioned flowers and to meet this demand we are selling this season a great deal of the gilly-flowers, stocks, fuchsias, heliotrope, pansies, but the demand in New York always has been and always will be for roses and violets. Millions of these flowers are sold every year in New York. It is impossible to give even a rough estimate of the amount.

"At this one exchange we have received as many as 20,000 roses a day from one of our greenhouses alone. Of course that was a holiday call and does not represent the daily sale.

"The violets are just as popular at Easter as they are in the depth of winter. We get better prices in the winter, but we sell more at Easter and these are the two great occasions in the flower market. Easter Eve and Christmas Eve we are open until twelve and at five in the morning; other days our sales are over in the afternoon and we open at six.



"A QUARTER A BUNCH."

In one corner of the big square room, which is bare except for its floral stock, a burst of sunlight attracts the eye. "There seems to be a great demand for yellow flowers," explains the manager, "perhaps because so many decorators are using yellow in the houses they do up and the flowers are wanted for harmony, but acacias and genestas are very fashionable. We have little demand for novelties, and experiments are not known in the flower exchanges; nothing comes to us that is not perfected beforehand.

"In the winter season the Scotch heather sells pretty well. So does the Manila heather, which resembles the Scotch and American varieties. This has been cultivated from the plants imported from the Philippines and has taken three or four years to bring to an acclimated state. It has a flower something like the arbutus, a little larger and a little more delicate in tint, the green having the thorny, spiky appearance of ordinary heather."

Asked concerning the best method of keeping violets fresh the manager said:

"That is not a good question to ask a florist. The best thing to do with violets the second day is to throw them away. No matter how carefully you keep them there is always a distressing odor about violets that are not perfectly fresh. A man who deals in flowers becomes very susceptible and oftentimes I have seen a woman on a car with a bunch of violets pinned on her gown that made me ill while perhaps other people would not notice the odor at all.

"Roses are different in this respect. Particularly is this true of American Beauties. Often from the flower exchange we have sent flowers to Scotland or England, and they have kept two weeks after they arrived.

At the flower exchanges one of the interesting features is the "flower women"—flower girls are reserved for comic operas and three volume novels. These women—most of them Germans—raise their own flowers, usually on Long Island, and bring them to the exchanges, where, for the usual percentage to the owners of the place, they have the privilege of displaying their wares and dealing with the retailers.

Some of these women have very beautiful collections, and even the heavy market baskets, the newspaper wrappings and the red pots cannot hide the abundant glory. One woman had a booth entirely filled with calla lilies, which were selling at $2 a dozen; another carnations for $1.50.

A search for the orchids among the wholesale dealers is unsatisfactory. The orchids, when they are sold by retailers, are usually imported directly by them, for the reason that they are very expensive and there is little call for them.

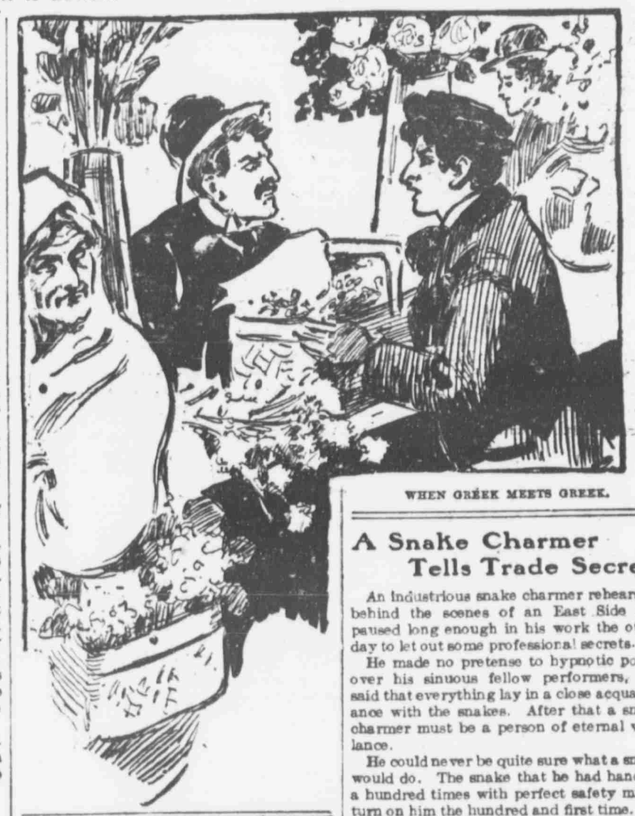
Yet the orchid by reason of this very exclusiveness remains the flower of the elect. There is, however, about this strange flower a certain uncanniness which prevents its popularity, even in the face of its value, for on many women it has the same effect as the reptiles. In fact, it is called in floral vocabularies 'the snake flower.'

"They are the cheapest flower in the world when you take into consideration the amount of time and vitality consumed in procuring them," said an orchid expert. "It is necessary for a collector to have patience, courage, scientific knowledge and not to know what hardship is when he meets it.

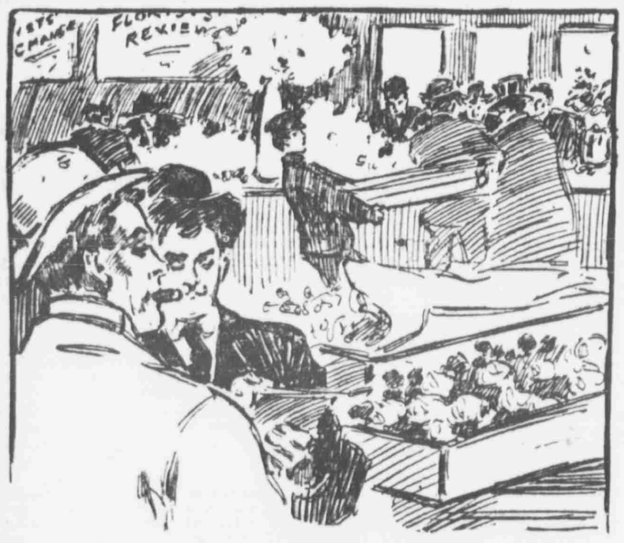
"I know of one collector who was sent to Central America and spent six months looking for a single kind of orchid for which there happened to be a popular demand. When he discovered it the blossoms were in an old burial ground growing out of the skulls and he was obliged to bring skulls and all back with him for fear of injuring the plants. Some of these orchids afterward brought as much as $175 a flower.

"It is no rare occurrence for a collector to lose his life by some malignant fever. This is particularly true in Panama and the region round about, where some of the most valuable orchids are found. Many of them grow in the most fetid swamps, where a man risks his life daily in their pursuit.

"The orchids seen in the florists' windows in New York are, however, the more ordinary specimens; the rare ones would not find purchasers. These are brought easily from the West Indies and the Southern forests."



WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK.



IN THE CUT FLOWER EXCHANGE.

A Snake Charmer Tells Trade Secrets

An industrious snake charmer rehearsing behind the scenes of an East Side hall paused long enough in his work the other day to let out some professional secrets.

He made no pretense to hypnotic power over his sinuous fellow performers, but said that everything lay in a close acquaintance with the snakes. After that a snake charmer must be a person of eternal vigilance.

He could never be quite sure what a snake would do. The snake that he had handled a hundred times with perfect safety might turn on him the hundred and first time.

One indication was especially to be trusted. A snake, like a cat, shows its anger by a slow movement of the tail. When the tail begins to wag the snake charmer must put aside the angry serpent and fetch out another if his little turn is to be done with safety.

This particular snake charmer was especially skilful in the handling of pythons. The python, according to his account of the matter, being a constrictor, is usually held to be non-venomous, but the bite of the python is to be avoided when the snake is shedding his skin.

At that time the python is blind from a film that comes over the eyes, a film that is shed with the cast-off skin. In this condition the creature is extremely nervous and sensitive, easily provoked to anger and somewhat venomous.

At other times the python is to be feared for the blow he strikes. It is like the kick of a mule and no man can stand up against it. The python strikes a man in the breast or near the waist. If he is disabled by the blow the snake may coil about him and do him mortal harm.

The snake charmer found it necessary for success in his business to keep three pythons, and, as they cost from $100 to $800 each, the business required some outlay of capital. He could not safely work with strange snakes. With three pythons whose temper he understood he could be pretty sure of always having at least one to work with.

He had to study the condition of a snake before undertaking to exhibit it. The snakes were fed every two weeks, and the snake charmer found that it was unsafe to handle them much until three or four days after their meal.

In the early stages of digestion they required quiet, and if disturbed were likely to disgorge what they had eaten. It is a serious matter to lose a meal when meals come two weeks apart. Sometimes a snake would die from being disturbed too soon after feeding. It was not difficult to replace a snake, for New York is an excellent snake market, but the loss of a python was a serious matter financially, and a new snake had to be studied before it could be publicly exhibited.

The important thing in picking up a snake was first to distract his attention. This was commonly done by holding a cloth in front of the creature. Instantly the eyes of the snake were fixed upon the cloth and then was the moment for the snake charmer to seize it.

He must take a firm hold just behind the head and not far enough back to permit the snake to turn upon him. After that the snake charmer must be wary, gentle, and ready upon the slightest sign of the snake's anger to put the creature back in his cage and get out another.

Picnic Season Here: Lots of People Glad

The summer picnic still prevails, and has to-day, if that be possible, a greater popularity than ever.

There are held nowadays in the season many monster political picnics, outings given by district political leaders, at which entertainment is provided for thousands, requiring fleets of steamboats and barges for their transportation to and from the picnic grounds, and calling for a well organized commissary department to provide and distribute the enormous quantities of supplies required for the feeding of companies so numerous.

There are also given at this season innumerable outings—outing is a favorite word for this form of entertainment—of political organizations and clubs and of numberless private associations, many of these bearing the name of their president or organizer, and many others of them bearing names quaint or curious or fantastic.

There is no end to these lesser organizations or coteries, or to the strange names they bear. Banners are swung across the street or great transparencies are placed in front of the headquarters of the greater organizations announcing well in advance the outing of one or another association, and placards displayed in windows, or printed small bills that can be put up almost anywhere, and which are posted in the neighborhood or district from which their members and guests are drawn, announce the outings of the smaller clubs or associations.

On many of these announcements is still to be seen a line long familiar: "Music by Prof. So-and-so." For the leader of the band or orchestra that provides the music for the annual outing of the this or that coterie or association or club or circle is always a professor. So he has always been, and so he seems likely to remain.

And then there are the church picnics, and the school picnics, and many others besides, picnics without end. The target companies have gone, but the picnic still survives, more popular than ever, and the picnic season of 1905 is about to open.

Break Eggs for a Living.

From Tit-Bits.

A correspondent of a contemporary, who has been searching for the most monotonous method of earning a living, decides in favor of that of cracking eggs.

"I met a man who said he was a biscuit manufacturer on a large scale, and was rather inclined to boast about the number of eggs—Continental eggs—which his firm bought in the course of a year. Now, it seems that to avoid calamity, five eggs are broken into a bowl at a time before being added to the common stock. There are men, he told me, who do nothing else but crack eggs. They become so expert that a man can dispose of 1,000 an hour, or 10,000 a day."

SPRING AWAKENING OF THE WOODLAND

Unfolding of Flower and Bud—Mist of the New Life—Pretty Show of the Suburbs—Struggle for Life.

Every hour of sunshine in the last two weeks of April counted for almost double its accustomed value. A mild March woke vegetation from its sleep, but a cold April held growth in check until nature was fairly bursting with impatience.

When the third week of the month was passed vegetation hung quivering and ready at a touch of genuine hot sunshine to transform the aspect of the outer world. You could trace the course of the brooks through suburban woodlands by the sinuous lines of vivid green where the skunk cabbage and its early fellows of various name were unfolding their tightly rolled leaves.

Even then the hypnotic power of the serried and silent tree trunks, so strange a charm of the winter woodlands, was a little broken by the faint, mistlike effect of tiny new leaf buds, and the airy gold of the spicebush blossoms. That faint mist of the new life was curiously elusive; it fled the approach, as the delicious spiral of the veery's song eludes pursuit through the depths of the June woodlands.

From a field on the woodland edge you saw the tender yellowish green of a million minute points of vivid life, but when you clambered up the stone wall the ethereal mist had withdrawn itself to the depths where the tree trunks were as a uniform dun wall or a steady downpour of sheeted rain. In the foreground, cleared of its veil, the beeches shone pale lavender and mottled silver, and the giant chestnuts confessed themselves by the curious coarse network of their ridgy bark.

Meanwhile, overhead and underfoot life was springing with hourly change. The low growing plants that hide all winter long beneath the covering of fallen leaves have one spring climate, semi-tropical if you will. So, too, have the treetops that keep access to all the sun and wind.

Between the two is that neutral zone of the woodland shrubs which is slower to respond to the wooings of spring. The treetops were thick with blossoms and swelling leaf buds, but just below only the sycamore's trunk betrayed consciousness of coming change. That ragged and tattered mendicant of the forest, all winter long white as a leper, shone with faint green.

Below at the foot of the trees the annual struggle for life among the wood plants was deepening into tragedy. There were beds of mottled dogtooth violets so dense that naught else could reach the sun and air, so dense, indeed, that nine out of ten bulbs were barren of blossoms.

The spring beauty carpeted patches of the surface almost as thickly, and sprang everywhere in company with other plants. That perfect thing, the tender heart shaped leaf of the wild ginger, was exquisite in its freshness with its faint frostlike fuzz completely covering the upper surface.

Millions of seedlings sprang from the prolific leaf mold, shortly to wither and die in the vain struggle for a proper share of nourishment. The woodland is nature's tenement house, and the infant mortality there is appalling.

You may count seedling oaks by the hundred in May and sapling oaks hardly by the dozen in November, and the infant progeny of that reckless prodigal the swamp maple are reduced from thousands to scores in a single summer. The attempt of New Yorkers to live by many thousands upon the pin point represented by a narrow area in the heart of Manhattan is successful and reasonable beside the intensity of vegetable life in every single square foot of The Bronx woodlands.

All that April accomplishes in vegetable growth awaits the magic touch of May. Those sultry days that come before the middle of the latter month convert the fields and woodlands into a veritable hothouse.

Overhead is the dim glazed roof of the thinly clouded heaven, and all between is as a moist bit of the tropics. The sun burns through, heating the earth, and the stored caloric is radiated back into the stagnant damp air until the whole area thus fended from chilling winds is a brooding calm in which life is urged to marvelous powers of production and growth.

If that sultry tropical calm holds for a day and a night the transformation wrought is like a miracle, and half a week of such weather sees an expansion greater than that of a full fortnight in a cold chill April.

HOW MANY REAL NEW YORKERS ARE THERE? MIGHTY FEW, ACCORDING TO THE CENSUS FIGURES

It is pretty generally agreed that the population of the city of New York, as it will be shown in this year's State census to be taken in May and June, will certainly reach and will most probably exceed 4,000,000. It is pretty generally agreed, also, that at the present rate of increase as shown by the Health Board and other reports, the population of the city by the next Federal census in 1910 will not be below 5,000,000.

How many New Yorkers—natives of New York—are there in the city at present out of the total population of 3,437,202 five years ago and 4,000,000 now?

A Londoner writing under the name of "Dagobert," and making a specialty of local information for Londoners, made not long ago a private census of the house in which he lived and was greatly surprised to find that of twenty-five persons in it only two were actual Londoners, the others having come from other parts of England, from Ireland or Scotland or from Continental countries. London has a much larger native born population than the city of New York, and receives much smaller accretions of population through immigration than this city.

By the last Federal census about a third of the whole population of the city—1,270,000—was born abroad, and none of these residents, of course, came under the designation of New Yorkers, strictly speaking. There are next those who, though born in the city of New York, are the children of parents born abroad. These number 1,375,000. Some of them were born here shortly after the arrival of their parents and, though legally native born, grew up under much the same conditions as their parents, usually speaking the language of their parents and being more familiar in childhood with foreign than with American customs of life.

There were in New York at the time of the last Federal census 400,000 residents who, though native born, were not natives of the city of New York. Of these, 125,000 were born in New York State, but not in New York city, 56,000 were born in New Jersey, 90,000 in Pennsylvania, 25,000 in Massachusetts and 22,750 in Virginia.

These figures account for 3,045,000 out, of the total New York population as returned by the last Federal census of 3,437,000, leaving about 392,000 persons, not all of whom are New Yorkers of the kind under consideration. It is customary to include in all census returns as natives of this city those concerning whom no actual knowledge is had, and it is customary to return as natives of New York those who, while residents here, were not actually in the city at the time of the census or, if in the city, were not accessible to the enumerators.

The number of these is not far from 40,000, and the conclusion is clear, therefore, that not more than one in ten of the resident population of the city comes correctly under the designation of "native born" New Yorkers of native parentage.

The actual number of veritable and authentic New Yorkers, so to speak, those born here of native parents, is not probably in excess of 100,000, and may be considerably less than that number. There are probably not more than 50,000 persons resident in the city of New York, all boroughs, both of whose parents were native New Yorkers and the children of native New Yorkers as well.

RED TAPE OVER TWENTY CENTS.

Gift to Civil Service Commission Starts Departments Working.

WASHINGTON, May 6.—"Can a Government department receive donations?" is the question that has been raised by the reception at the Washington city post office of an international money order to the credit of the Civil Service Commission.

The amount contributed, or intended to be contributed, to the commission is 20 cents, but the matter is held to involve a precedent. Accordingly, the advice of the Comptroller of the Treasury was sought, and that official, after due consideration, decided that it would be illegal for any branch of the Government to receive money outside of its regular appropriations by Congress, but that it would be permissible to turn the money into the Treasury, where it would find its place either in the conscience fund or "appropriations unprovided for."

The Comptroller further remarked, unofficially, that the amount so generously donated might, on account of its magnitude, be put to such uses as the commission decided. The latter, through its custodian, turned the order over to the post office, and that institution will, in its turn, endeavor to give it back to the sender, a citizen of Austria, or to the Austrian Government.